

Appl No. 10/716,214
Amd. Dated June 16, 2005
Reply to Office Action of December 17, 2004

REMARKS:

The Office Action dated November 3, 2004 has been received and carefully reviewed. Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the remarks below.

The Examiner has identified multiple inventions in the present application and has required restriction to one of two groups of claims. Applicant affirms the election made on December 6, 2004 to prosecute Claims 1-9, 11-17, 19-21, and 23-27. Accordingly, Claims 10, 18, and 22 are withdrawn from further consideration in the present application.

Claims 1-9, 11-17, 19-21, and 23-27 are currently pending in the present application. Claims 13, 15, 19, and 20 have been amended.

Claim 1 is an independent claim and calls for a single pass process for forming a yard sign and comprising the steps of: printing an image on a first side of a sheet of sign stock coated with a fusible material on at least a second side opposite the first side; folding the sheet in half with the second side on an inside of the folded sheet and the first side on the outside; and applying an energy to each of side edges of the folded sheet to fuse the fusible material to form a pocket within the folded sheet to receive a sign support member.

Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious from Archie, Jr. et al. '171 in view of Gill '451. Archie '171 is directed to a process for manufacturing a two sided image formed by a web printed on one side, folded back on itself, and adhered using a web of a heat activated adhesive. The printed, folded, and glued web is then cut to size.

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There is no disclosure or suggestion in Archie that the two sided image might be formed into an outdoor sign or that the web is coated with a fusible material, which can be used as an adhesive, as called for in Claim 1. Additionally, the process of Archie does not produce a pocket suitable for receiving a sign support member, as required in Claim 1. Gill '451 discloses a method for manufacturing an outdoor sign including printing on one side of a sign blank, applying lines of adhesive along edges of the sign blank on the surface opposite the printed surface, folding the sign blank in half, and inserting a sign support, such as a wire bail. There is no suggestion in Gill '451 that the sign blank is coated or that an energy is applied to the side edges to adhere the halves of the sign together, as called for in Claim 1. Although Archie appears to be a single pass process, there is no suggestion in Gill that the sign is produced in a single pass process.

For the reasons given above, applicant urges that there is no suggestion in Archie or Gill to combine their teachings to produce a process for forming a yard sign in the manner called for in Claim 1; and therefore, Claim 1 should be allowable over Archie '171 and Gill '451 and the other cited references.

Claims 2-9 depend from Claim 1, add steps thereto, and are believed to distinguish over the cited references for the same reasons as Claim 1.

Claim 11 is an independent claim and is similar to Claim 1 except that Claim 11 specifies that the sheet is folded with the second sheet at least partially facing inwardly on itself and forming end edges opposite the folded edge.

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Claim 12 is an independent claim and is similar to Claim 1 except that Claim 12 specifies that folding the sheet produces overlapping side edges on the sheet.

Claims 11 and 12 are believed to distinguish over Archie '171 and Gill '451 for the same reasons as Claim 1.

Claim 13 is an independent claim and, as amended, calls for a single pass process for forming a yard sign essentially comprising the steps of: conveying a two-sided sheet of sign stock coated with a fusible polymer to a printing station and screen printing an image on an image side of the sheet; conveying the printed sheet to a scoring station and scoring the sheet to form a fold line along the sheet; conveying the scored sheet to a folding mechanism and folding the sheet at the fold line; and conveying the folded sheet to a sealing device and ultrasonically heating each of the side edges to fuse the polymer to thereby form a pocket within the folded sheet to receive a sign support.

Claim 13 was amended to emphasize the mechanical steps of the entire single pass process for forming pocketed yard signs. Claim 13 is believed to distinguish over Archie '171 and Gill '451, and the other cited references, for the same reasons as Claim 1.

Claims 14-17, including amended Claim 15, depend from Claim 13, add steps thereto, and are believed to distinguish over the cited references for the same reasons as Claim 1.

Claim 19 is an independent claim and, as amended, calls for a single pass process for forming a yard sign including the steps of: screen printing an image on an image side of a sheet coated with a fusible polymer having a first thickness on the image side and a

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greater second thickness on an opposite inner side of the sheet; scoring the sheet to form a fold line; folding the sheet in half at the fold line using recited mechanisms; and ultrasonically heating side edges of the folded sheet to fuse the polymer on the inner side of the side edges to form a pocket to receive a support member using specified apparatus and mechanisms.

There is no disclosure or suggestion in Archie '171 or Gill '451, or the other cited references, of a process for forming a yard sign from a sheet having a fusible polymer coating of a first thickness on the image side and a thicker coating on the inside, in the manner recited in Claim 19. Therefore, Claim 19 should be allowable over the cited references.

Claims 20 and 21 depend from Claim 19, add steps thereto, and are believed to distinguish over the cited references for the same reasons as Claim 19.

Claim 23 is an independent claim and calls for a single pass apparatus for forming a yard sign and comprising: a screen printing station receiving a two sided sheet of a sign stock coated with a fusible polymer and screen printing an image on an image side of the sheet; a scoring station receiving the printed sheet and having a set of scoring members to score the sheet to form a fold line; a folding mechanism receiving the scored sheet and folding the sheet at the fold line and a sealing station receiving the folded sheet and ultrasonically heating side edges of the folded sheet to fuse the polymer along the side edges to form a pocket to receive a sign support member.

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Archie '171 forms products printed on both sides from a web and adheres the folded parts with an adhesive sheet. Because Archie's starting materials and final product are different from the pocket yard sign called for in Claim 23, applicant urges that the yard sign forming apparatus called for in Claim 23 would not be obvious from Archie. Gill '451 does not disclose any specific apparatus for forming a yard sign. Additionally, Gill uses adhesive strips to adhere the sign halves together, not a polymer coating fused ultrasonically. Even though Gill generally suggests that the sign could be manufactured by "automated equipment", there is not suggestion of the specific stations called for in Claim 23. For these reasons, applicant urges that Claim 23 should distinguish over any combination of Archie '171 and Gill '451 and the other cited references.

Claims 24-27 depend from Claim 23, add details thereto, and are believed to distinguish over the cited references for the same reasons as Claim 23.

Claims 1-9, 11-17, 19-21, and 23-27 are presented for reconsideration. Applicant contends that said claims define processes and apparatus for forming yard signs which are not anticipated by or obvious from any of the references of record, either singly or in combination. Therefore, the allowance of Claims 1-9, 11-17, 19-21, and 23-27 is earnestly solicited.

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The Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's attorney at the telephone number listed below in the event it is felt the prosecution of this application can be expedited thereby.

Respectfully submitted,

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